

2022

A Typeface for Tolkien: Hammer Uncials in Tolkienian and Gaelic Texts

Eduardo Boheme Kumamoto

Independent scholar, eduardo.kumamoto@gmail.com

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholar.valpo.edu/journaloftolkienresearch>



Part of the [Book and Paper Commons](#), and the [Graphic Design Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Boheme Kumamoto, Eduardo (2022) "A Typeface for Tolkien: Hammer Uncials in Tolkienian and Gaelic Texts," *Journal of Tolkien Research*: Vol. 15: Iss. 2, Article 9.

Available at: <https://scholar.valpo.edu/journaloftolkienresearch/vol15/iss2/9>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by ValpoScholar. It has been accepted for inclusion in Journal of Tolkien Research by an authorized administrator of ValpoScholar. For more information, please contact a ValpoScholar staff member at scholar@valpo.edu.

Whether or not one judges books by their covers, readers should generally assume that publishing houses take pains to design them, and part of this process is the choice of a suitable typeface for the title and the author's name. This choice is relevant also because it is commonly held that typefaces communicate not only through the actual written words: the letterforms are often said to convey a certain mood or, as Sean Adams (2019: 9) puts it, 'like images, each typeface communicates an idea, emotions, and point of view. Helvetica might speak to neutrality and information; Garamond can read as literary and classic; Bodoni feels sophisticated, urbane, and crisp'. At the same time, this mood is not stable, since the qualities one attributes to a given typeface will not necessarily be shared by another observer or by the designer who created it.

Having this instability in mind, the main objective of this article is to examine a typeface—or rather a family of intimately related typefaces—that is sometimes used in covers of Tolkien-related books and widely employed also in texts that seek to impart a feeling of Gaelic tradition, especially Irish. First, Tolkien's remarks about a particular typeface will be expounded, so that important names in twentieth-century typography may be presented. After that, Victor Hammer's Uncial typefaces will be examined, especially in their relation to Irish scripts. Lastly, I will ponder on some reasons that might explain why these typefaces are employed in books related to Tolkien's literature.

ALBERTUS AND PERPETUA

Tolkien's known remarks about typefaces are scant but vigorously expressed, as recounted by Hammond and Scull (2004: 179–82 and 2017: 447–49). In January 1954, Allen and Unwin asked Tolkien for suggestions concerning the dust-jacket for *The Lord of the Rings*, which he provided on 23 March. His designs were calligraphically rendered, but Rayner Unwin suggested that the titling be set in type, to which Tolkien agreed. The author wished a 'simple form of Black Letter' could be used because, in his opinion, it accorded better 'with the design and the elvish script than roman'. Unwin's recommendation, on the other hand, was for 'some bold typeface', one that 'doesn't look too roman but at the same time has a better display value than black letter'. On 31 May, Tolkien received the proofs of the dust-jacket for *The Fellowship of the Ring* and was displeased:

I think the lettering on the page is unusually ugly. It has no affinity at all to 'Black Letter', being not decorative but brutally emphatic: the f e R g and J might be singled out for special condemnation. (It

is much less unpleasant when smaller, but even then the e stands out as an ill-designed letter.)

A normal serified uncial (capital) type would be indefinitely preferable, I think.

(quoted in Hammond and Scull 2004: 182)

Even though prepared to accept other shortcomings to avoid delays, Tolkien was adamant about the letterforms: ‘*I would rather have the things as they are than cause any more delay. But if this can be done without delay, I would like a different type for the title-lettering at least*’ (Carpenter and Tolkien 2006: 182, emphasis by the author). According to Hammond and Scull (2004: 183), the typeface then employed was Albertus, but upon Tolkien’s disapproving remarks Ronald Eames at Allen and Unwin answered that they would use instead ‘a much lighter Old Face type called Perpetua’ (quoted in Hammond and Scull 2017: 457).

Albertus—an ‘embarrassingly popular’ titling face, for James Moran (1971: 143)—was commissioned in 1932 to the German typographer and calligrapher Berthold Wolpe (1905–1989), who ‘specialized in inscriptions in bronze and stone’ and, when it appeared, the typeface was seen to be ‘derived from letters which were cut rather than drawn’ (Moran 1971: 143). Noticing the ‘clear signs of its carved origins’, Stephen Coles (2012: 96–7) perceives in Albertus ‘an official or ceremonial aura’, in contrast with Tolkien’s view of it as ‘brutally emphatic’. In a Tolkien-related environment, Albertus can be seen on the title page and the headings of Karen Wynn Fonstad’s *The Atlas of Tolkien’s Middle-earth* (revised paperback edition, HarperCollins, 2016).

Perpetua, the typeface eventually chosen for the dust-jacket of *The Lord of the Rings*, was designed in 1925 by the English engraver and sculptor Eric Gill (1882–1940), whose life was not short of controversy. Contrasting with the robustness of Albertus, Perpetua is described by Adams (2019: 63) as ‘delicate and fine’, and potentially ‘anemic’ in smaller sizes. In larger sizes, for Morison (1973: 104), it has ‘a noble, monumental, appearance’, whereas Seddon (2016: 118) recommends that it be used for ‘authoritative text and an extra twist of personality’.

The differing views expressed about Albertus (ceremonial, but brutally emphatic) and Perpetua (anemic, but also monumental and imparting a twist of personality) reinforce the idea that typefaces are not unanimously perceived and that the emotions to which they give rise are not described in completely objective ways. But both typefaces have one thing in common, in that behind them lies an important—arguably the most important—figure in twentieth-century typography in England: Stanley Morison (1889–1967).

Morison was not a type designer or a calligrapher, but called himself a ‘typographical consultant’, according to James Moran, who also claims that

he was not a particularly good artist in the sense that he could draw a beautiful and accurate type layout [...]; what mattered to [him] was the idea, and he conveyed this to a skilled compositor, sometimes in the most rudimentary fashion.¹ The results were often brilliant, being the product of reasoning power rather than a pedestrian copy of letterforms on to a layout pad. He would also alter proofs until a desired result was achieved.

(Moran 1971: 9–10)

Largely a self-taught man, Morison's interests encompassed not only typography, but also paleography (the study of ancient scripts), and from 1928 he maintained correspondence with the eminent scholar E.A. Lowe, who became his friend. Even though his skills in that field of studies are not universally acknowledged (see Moran 1971: 162), Daniel Wakelin, professor of Medieval Paleography at Oxford University, refers to Morison as an 'imaginative paleographer' and to his posthumous book *Politics and Script*—edited from the 1957 Lyell Lectures at Oxford—as an 'overlooked masterpiece' (Wakelin 2017: 4). However, Morison is best known as the typographical adviser for the Monotype Corporation, a post he held from 1922 to 1954 (Barker 1972: 460). It was in this capacity that he commissioned Eric Gill and Berthold Wolpe to design the typefaces that would later be released as Perpetua and Albertus.

It is worth noting that in 1913 Morison worked for *The Imprint*, a journal coedited by the calligrapher Edward Johnston (1872–1944), with whom he would become friends. Johnston's handbook *Writing & Illuminating, & Lettering* influenced J.R.R. Tolkien's own handwriting (Hammond and Scull 2004: 201; see also Fliss and Schaefer 2022: 104) but, despite having lived most of their lives as contemporaries, and despite some common people who crossed both men's paths at a certain point—unsurprisingly, given the occasional overlap in their trades—such as R.W. Chapman, George Gordon, and presumably Kenneth Sisam (see Barker 1972: 184, 252, 263), I did not find any evidence, or reason to think such evidence exists, that Morison and Tolkien even knew who each other was. The next section introduces two other relevant figures in the typographical scene of the twentieth century who had professional links with Morison.

¹ According to Morison himself, this was the case with the ubiquitous Times New Roman—incidentally being used in this very article—whose rough drawings were penciled by him and then handed to the draftsman Victor Lardent (Barker 1972: 292).

A TYPEFACE SOME CALL CELTIC

According to McGuinne (2010: 2), partly due to the respect for the scribal tradition in Ireland and to ‘an inherent sense of aesthetic conservatism’, until the 1960s, texts written in the Irish language were generally printed in types based on the medieval scripts found, for instance, in the Book of Kells and the Book of Armagh.² In the 1920s, the Irish scholar, printer, and typographer Colm Ó Lochlainn (1892–1972) felt that a new Gaelic typeface was needed, and he discussed it with the Monotype Corporation and Stanley Morison in 1929 (McGuinne 2010: 139–40). This exchange would give rise to the Colum Cille Type in 1935.

But most important for this article is that in 1930, bearing Morison’s letter of introduction, Ó Lochlainn visited the Klingspor Type Foundry in Offenbach, Germany. There he expressed his interest in a typeface called Hammerschrift, (or Hammer Unziale), designed in 1923 by the Austrian artist Victor Hammer (1882–1967). Hammerschrift was the first uncial typeface he completed, each one a refinement of the predecessor, the other ones being Samson (1931), Pindar (1937), and the American Uncial (1943, re-released in 1953 as Neue Hammer Unziale).³

In a 1932 article, Ó Lochlainn exalted the Irish look of the Hammerschrift (McGuinne 2010: 142) and, upon hearing about it, Hammer himself wrote to Ó Lochlainn, affirming to have ‘in fact studied very carefully Irish manuscripts which are among the loveliest existing’ (Hammer 1932a).⁴ Two weeks later, he claimed to have started studying the Book of Kells (Hammer 1932b: 1). Ó Lochlainn’s idea—unrelated to his dealings with Morison and the Monotype—was to expand the Hammerschrift, including more Irish-looking letterforms. Thus, he conceived variant glyphs, such as *ǵ* to accompany the existing *g*, and redesigned others, such as *Ĉ* (i.e., *t* with a curved shaft). This extended typeface was given the name Baoithín, after St Columba’s disciple (McGuinne 2010: 143).

Assessing Victor Hammer’s life and accomplishments, Sebastian Carter (2003: 30) claims that ‘the script he developed, first in his calligraphy and later in his types, was by no means an academic uncial [...]; it was more of an adaptation of the script’s principles to twentieth-century use’. Indeed, uncial script proper was

2 One such typeface can be seen in the printed speech delivered by Jeremiah J. Hogan when Tolkien received his honorary degree from the National University of Ireland (see Hogan 1954).

3 A fifth typeface, Andromaque, was completed in 1959. While also called uncial, its Greek aspect makes it very distinct from the others, and it will not be considered in this article. An instructive document showing all Hammer’s typefaces (including the unfinished Aurora Uncial) can be found on the Klingspor Museum website (cf. *Victor Hammer* [n.d.]).

4 Victor Hammer’s letters to Colm Ó Lochlainn are available on the New York Heritage Digital Collections—he emigrated to America in 1939. This letter is said to be addressed to an ‘unknown recipient’, but McGuinne (2010: 142) confirms that the recipient was Ó Lochlainn.

a majuscule—i.e., written between two lines instead of four—while the most successful of Hammer’s typefaces, the American Uncial, was bicameral, with upper and lowercase characters. It is also worth noting that, while his typefaces are called *uncial*, some lowercase characters—such as *a*, *b*, *e*, *m*, *n*, and *t*—owe their appearance to the very round *insular half-uncial* script dominant in the already mentioned Book of Kells and in the famous Lindisfarne Gospels. Thus, one might say that inspiration came from mixed sources, both uncial and insular half-uncial.

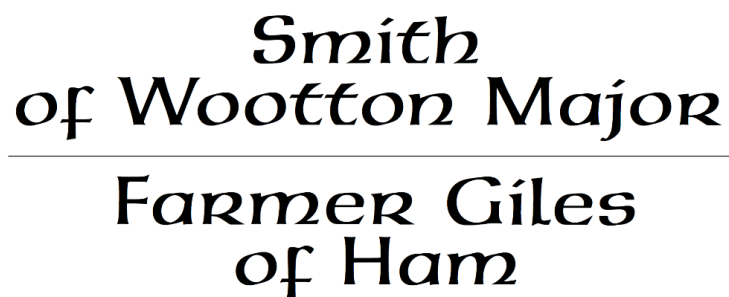
This imprecision in nomenclature—which probably stems in part from a common confusion between both scripts—does not detract anything from Hammer’s achievements but explains why Ó Lochlainn saw the typeface as particularly appropriate for Irish printing. Acknowledging this perception but expressing disagreement on the suitability of Hammer’s typefaces for Gaelic texts, Mathew D. Staunton (2005: para. 24–26 of 29) affirms that Hammer’s American Uncial is ‘now definitely perceived as Irish, especially in the United States’ and, ‘while aesthetically quite attractive, this is not a very readable font’ and ‘not popular with Irish typographers.’ Still, it is common to see the American Uncial in Ireland, adorning placards, souvenirs, and engraved on tombstones, and Hammer’s claims concerning Irish manuscripts, including the Book of Kells, somehow legitimize the use of his typefaces in Gaelic contexts.

What is curious, though, is that the same letterforms perceived as Irish have been often selected to embellish books either by Tolkien or related to his literature. And it is curious mainly because of his well-known attempts to disavow comparisons with Celtic things. In 1937, for instance, Edward Crankshaw (Allen and Unwin’s reader) expressed negatively that ‘The Silmarillion’ had ‘eye-splitting Celtic names’ and hints of the ‘mad, bright-eyed beauty that perplexes all Anglo-Saxons in face of Celtic art’. An ill-pleased Tolkien then answered: ‘Needless to say they are not Celtic! [...] I do know Celtic things (many in their original languages Irish and Welsh), and feel for them a certain distaste: largely for their fundamental unreason’ (Carpenter and Tolkien 2006: 25–6).

However, scholars such as Verlyn Flieger (2005) and Dimitra Fimi (2006) have since demonstrated that his works in fact were inspired by various Celtic sources, not only Welsh, which he was known to admire. For Flieger, Tolkien’s claim ‘does not match with the evidence [...] and] sorts ill with [his] later statement to Waldman that he wanted his mythology to have “the fair elusive beauty that some call Celtic”’ (Flieger 2005: 122). It must be said that Tolkien parenthetically added that said beauty ‘is rarely found in genuine ancient Celtic things’ (Carpenter and Tolkien 2006: 144). However, it seems that he succeeded in imparting to his works something of that Celtic beauty, at least insofar as typography is concerned, due to the use of Hammer’s typefaces in both Celtic and Tolkienian texts. Examples of the latter are given below, and in the next section I propose some reasons that might explain this shared use.

While it is possible to tell the Hammer's typefaces apart by inspecting certain glyphs (see Carter 2003: 28), they have so many elements in common that, for convenience, they will be collectively called *Hammer Uncials* in the following discussion. This umbrella expression will also be used for cases in which the typeface was modified, for lettering clearly based on them, and for typefaces that may have been cloned and released under different names.

Many of the examples are books and their covers can be easily found on the internet, but because some have been redesigned over the years with new editions, the relevant year and publishing house are included. To give the reader an idea of what Hammer Uncials look like, the image below replicates the title *Smith of Wootton Major* and *Farmer Giles of Ham* as found in the 1969 Ballantine edition, with cover art by the Brothers Hildebrandt.



The image shows two lines of text in a decorative, blackletter-style font. The first line reads "Smith of Wootton Major" and the second line reads "Farmer Giles of Ham". A horizontal line is positioned between the two lines of text.

Figure 1 – Example of Hammer Uncials.

Other examples include the following:

- Henry N. Beard and Douglas C. Kenney's *Bored of the Rings* (ROC, 1969)—the lettered title is clearly based on Hammer Uncials, even though given a rough-edged aspect like the typeface employed in Peter Jackson's *The Lord of the Rings*;⁵
- J.E.A. Tyler's *The New Tolkien Companion* (Picador, 1979);
- Jane Chance's *Tolkien's Art: "A Mythology for England"* (Macmillan, 1980);
- Ruth S. Noel's *The Languages of Tolkien's Middle-earth* (Houghton Mifflin, 1980)—incidentally, the title page of the book employs Albertus;
- Nigel Robinson and Linda Wilson's *The Tolkien Quiz Book* (St. Martin's Press, 1981)—in the title, the overshoot of *t* above the cross stroke was removed, as was the tittle of *i*;

⁵ According to Peter Klassen (2014), Jackson's movies employed a tailor-made font called *Sauron* for the overarching title *The Lord of the Rings*. Klassen himself designed an alternative to that and released it as *Ringbearer Medium*.

- *Homenaje a Tolkien: 19 Relatos Fantásticos* (Timun Mas, 2004, selected by Martin H. Greenberg)—translation of *After the King: Stories in Honor of J.R.R. Tolkien*;
- William Chad Newsom's *Talking of Dragons: The children's books of J.R.R. Tolkien and C.S. Lewis* (Christian Focus, 2005);
- Verlyn Flieger's *There Would Always Be a Fairy Tale: More Essays on Tolkien* (Kent State University Press, 2017);
- *The Hobbit, A Software Adventure* (Addison-Wesley);
- *The Lord of the Rings* (Ralph Bakshi's film poster)—the lettered title is clearly based on Hammer Uncials;
- *The J.R.R. Tolkien Collection: The Hobbit*, by the Tudor Mint;
- *Amon Hen* (Tolkien Society, e.g., n. 91 [1988]);
- *Mallorn* (Tolkien Society, e.g., n. 14 [1980]);
- *Parma Eldalamberon* (e.g., n. 1 [1971]).

SELECTING TYPEFACES

In the dispute because of the dust-jacket of *The Lord of the Rings*, Tolkien did not have his way concerning the typefaces: he wished for a 'simple form of black letter' and got Albertus; then, he suggested a 'normal serified uncial' and was left with Perpetua. While part of his comments had been printed in *Letters* (Carpenter and Tolkien 2006: 182), the specific remarks about typefaces were omitted then and, to my knowledge, they were first published in *J.R.R. Tolkien: Artist & Illustrator* (1995) by Hammond and Scull. If that is the case, long before his wish for a serified uncial had been known, designers had already chosen Hammer's Uncials for texts that have Tolkien as their central theme. The reason for that, thus, was probably not the author's own preferences, but the letterforms themselves.

I pointed out that typefaces are often said to convey a certain mood which is not dependent on the actual words. As designer Kyle Rath (2015: 67–8) puts it, type is communicative non-linguistically as well as linguistically, and letterforms may be interpretable in terms of their image-qualities. For him, one of the methods used by designers to select and apply type is *experiential*: 'the meaning potential of letterforms is derived from our interpretation or experience of *form*' (2015: 72).

According to his theory, the *experiential form* of type is subdivided in *reminiscent form* and *intuitive form*. The first is metaphorical: the visual qualities of letterforms imitate things encountered in the physical world and are, thus, *reminiscent* of material phenomena we have already experienced (Rath 2015: 74). One of the examples is the fraktur script, whose sharp, angular, and splintered shape resemble medieval weaponry, and may lead a designer to use it suggesting "danger", for instance (2015: 109–12). The second way, type as *intuitive form*,

comes about when the features of a letterform cannot be readily compared to our material experience and, yet, they have a unique essence which is perceived viscerally by our *intuition*. He exemplifies with a letterform that can be said to have a ‘quirky or peculiar personality, even though we may not be able to immediately refer to a visual example of “quirky”’ (Rath 2015: 76–7). This is similar to the previous claim that Perpetua may impart to a text an ‘extra twist of personality’ (Seddon 2016: 118): we cannot readily point out in the world something that physically and objectively demonstrates this twist of personality.

Rath’s concept of *type as reminiscent form* may help explain why Hammer Uncials are used in Tolkienian and Celtic texts. The resemblance of many of its letterforms to the script of the Book of Kells has been previously indicated as a reason for the adoption of these typefaces in Celtic texts; being reminiscent of the insular half-uncial, they are consequently chosen for Irish texts.

But the half-uncial (and, for that matter, uncial script) also resembles one of Tolkien’s most famous creations, namely the Fëanorian script. The similarity between *Tengwar* and half-uncials was noticed, for instance, by Måns Björkman ([n.d.], ‘The formal book-hand style’ section). Thus, Hammer Uncials end up being reminiscent of Tolkien’s *Tengwar*. This can be verified by comparing the letters below with the *Tengwar* table in *The Lord of the Rings*, Appendix E (specifically letters nos. 2, 10, 18, 20, 22, 23, 24, 25, 27, and the vowel *e* on a short carrier).⁶

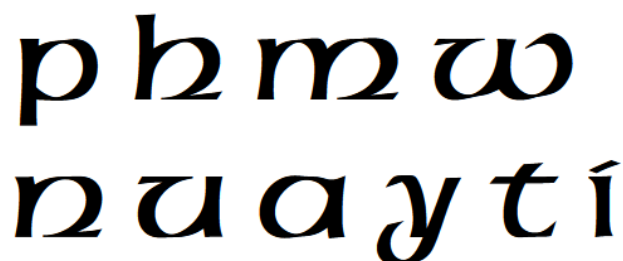


Figure 2 – Hammer Uncials resembling Tengwar.

Therefore, it may be that the *Tengwar*—which adorn *The Lord of the Rings* from the very title page and are present in important calligraphic pieces of the book such as the Ring inscription and the Doors of Durin—have acquired such a distinctiveness that led people to notice the reminiscence of their form in the Hammer Uncials, and they thus selected and applied them Tolkien-related designs.

⁶ It is perhaps worth specifying that this is the American Uncial, the latest of Hammer’s uncial typefaces and whose *y* is different from his previous designs.

Another possible reason is a connection between Tolkien's non-fictional calligraphy and Hammer Uncials. Since 1937, *The Hobbit* has shown readers how capable he was with medieval letterforms, and the two maps in the book provide us with many letters that resemble Victor Hammer's glyphs. Specific letterforms aside, the general rounded aspect that characterizes uncial and half-uncial scripts is noticeable in the calligraphy of *The Hobbit* as well.

Less likely, but still a possibility, is that one single letter has drawn Tolkien and Hammer Uncials together, namely his handwritten *T*. It seems ubiquitous: very conspicuous in *The Hobbit*, in the dust-jacket of *The Two Towers*, crystallized in the shape of the tengwa *L*, and in Tolkien's famous signature. As mentioned above, Hammer's *T* in *The Tolkien Quiz Book* was modified: the portion of the shaft above the cross stroke was clipped, even though the result is somewhat clumsy. But the very fact that it *was* modified indicates the purpose of making it even more like Tolkien's *T* (I cannot conceive of another explanation), highlighting the importance of this letter which, for obvious reasons, is so associated with the author.

Two difficulties with this set of theories must be acknowledged. First, we should not assume that every work employing Hammer Uncials is part of a direct line of descent, as if we could, by inquiring the first designer in the line, discover the type-guidelines for all Tolkienian works. Different people at different times would justify their choices differently, and we may never be able to discover the exact reasons in every case. In the end, some may have simply copied the choice of previous books, while others may have arrived independently at the same conclusion: that Hammer Uncials somehow look suitable in a Tolkienian context.

Secondly, we should entertain the possibility that no special reason influenced the choice other than the iconicity of Hammer's typefaces. They are relatively well-known and easy to recognize and to obtain. For Rath (2015: 98), some typefaces (e.g., Helvetica and Comic Sans) 'may become iconic simply because they are accessible', and iconicity leads them to be selected often. As a result, 'the more the typeface is used, the more it is used' (2015: 102). This statement echoes a witty claim by Erik Spiekermann (2012: 6) apropos Arial, saying that its 'astonishing prevalence is largely due to its astonishing prevalence'.

While Hammer Uncials are the main object of this article, another font also inspired in uncial and half-uncial letterforms exemplifies better what 'astonishing prevalence' means in Tolkienian and Celtic texts (Figure 3). It is found under various names—*Gandalf Regular*, *Tolkien Regular*, *Kells*, *Kelt*, *Meath* (one of Ireland's counties), etc.—and the differences between them, when they exist at all, are subtle. One may see it in *Parma Eldalamberon XIV* (2003), on the heading of the journal *Mythlore*, and in Jared Lobdell's *A Tolkien Compass* (second edition, 2003). It is also immensely popular on websites and Instagram accounts dedicated to Tolkien and has arguably become iconic in Tolkienian environments because of its extensive use, something that happened to the Hammer's Uncials as well.

J. R. R. TOLKIEN

Figure 3 – Example of *Tolkien Regular*.

Unfortunately, the story of the *Tolkien Regular* typeface and its peers is not well documented, and I could not determine which of them is the original one, who designed the letterforms, nor unravel the chain of font cloning that took place at a certain point. Therefore, I cannot tell whether its Tolkien- or its Celtic-strain came first, but that Tolkien and Ireland share some common typographical ground is witnessed by the various names these typefaces received over the years.

FINAL REMARKS

Side by side on my shelf are John M. Bowers *Tolkien's Lost Chaucer* and Sisam and Tolkien's *A Middle English Reader and Vocabulary* (2005 Dover republication). They are somewhat close in theme, since both deal with fourteenth-century English authors, but the content of neither book is suggested by the typefaces used for the titles. The former displays Bodoni—a style often seen in fashion magazines such as *Vogue*—while the latter shows an uncial type which, unlike Hammer's, is meant to reproduce the actual medieval majuscule script, with characteristic *A*, *D*, *E*, and *M*. From a historical perspective, neither would be completely accurate: the system of scripts in fourteenth-century England comprised gothic scripts, such as Textura, Anglicana, and Secretary. According to Parkes (2008: 132), in the beginning of the century, Anglicana was last in the hierarchy, but it gradually replaced Textura 'in the estimation of scribes'. In that sense, then, both typefaces are anachronistic: Bodoni is too modern, and uncial is too old, more appropriate to an Old English than a Middle English reader. Why, then, did designers not select or create for these books a typeface based on the Anglicana script? A possible answer is that historical accuracy is not necessarily desirable for good typography. Anglicana is not tremendously legible for the modern reader, and the choice for more familiar letterforms would understandably take precedence over History, after all, legibility is one of the most important principles in typography.

The points I want to re-emphasize with these examples are (1) that typefaces bring with them connotations (historical ones, in this case), and communicate in different levels, but (2) it is hard, sometimes impossible, to know exactly what leads a person to choose a certain typeface for a given text. When we find an explanation that apparently disavows its use, another equally valid reason emerges to justify it.

But even if we can only go so far in trying to find explanations, and even if the discoveries are often speculative, it is still a helpful exercise to make us more aware of our own choices when we have to select and apply type, something that is not at all done exclusively by professional graphic designers.

Tolkien himself was aware of the role played by typefaces in a book cover, and other authors certainly are as well, with reason: their creative works deserve to receive clothing they deem adequate. Conversely, type designers also want their letters to be used with attention. When Victor Hammer issued his American Uncial, he remarked:

What virtues it has were not achieved magically, but come directly from the love and care with which I have cut it. This requires something from you as a printer. You are requested to use it creatively, that is: not for startling effects, but allowing its virtues a straightforward statement in use.

(quoted in Carter 2003: 31)

Hammer could not imagine that his uncials would one day cross Tolkien's legacy, and it is to be hoped that everyone who employs them do so creatively, following their designer's wish. Since Tolkien readers often treat his own works with love and care, there is cause to believe that Hammer's creation is in good hands. Whatever precise reason might explain the use of his letters, it is possible that, perhaps intuitively, we readers can perceive in his uncial typefaces the fair elusive beauty that some call Tolkienian.

WORKS CITED

- ADAMS, Sean. 2019. *The Designer's Dictionary of Type* (New York: Abrams)
- BARKER, Nicolas. 1972. *Stanley Morison* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press)
- BJÖRKMAN, Måns. [n.d.]. 'Tengwar Calligraphy'. *Amanye Tenceli*. <at.mansbjorkman.net/teng_calligraphy.htm> [accessed 6 February 2023]
- CARPENTER, Humphrey, and Christopher Tolkien (eds.). 2006. *The Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien* (London: HarperCollins)
- CARTER, Sebastian. 2003. 'Victor Hammer', in *Type and Typography: Highlights from Matrix, the review for printers and bibliophiles* (New York: Mark Batty), pp. 28–39

- COLES, Stephen. 2012. *The Anatomy of Type: A Graphic Guide to 100 Typefaces* (New York: Harper Design)
- FIMI, Dimitra. 2006. ““Mad” Elves and “Elusive Beauty”: Some Celtic Strands of Tolkien’s Mythology’, *Folklore*, 117.2, 156–70
- FLIEGER, Verlyn. 2005. *Interrupted Music: The Making of Tolkien’s Mythology* (Kent, OH: The Kent State University Press)
- FLISS, William, and Sarah C. Schaefer. 2022. *J.R.R. Tolkien: The Art of the Manuscript* (Milwaukee, WI: Haggerty Museum of Art)
- HAMMER, Victor. 1932a. ‘Letter from Victor Hammer to unknown recipient 15th July 1932’ <<https://cdm16694.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p15085coll2/id/4518/rec/1>> [accessed 5 January 2023]
- . 1932b. ‘Letter from Victor Hammer to Mr. Lochlainn, 29th July 1932’ <<https://cdm16694.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p15085coll2/id/4313/rec/2>> [accessed 5 January 2023]
- HAMMOND, Wayne G., and Christina Scull. 2004. *J.R.R. Tolkien: Artist & Illustrator* (London: HarperCollins)
- . 2017. *The J.R.R. Tolkien Companion and Guide: Chronology*, 2nd edn (London: HarperCollins)
- HOGAN, Jeremiah J. 1954. *Text of Introductory Address delivered by Professor Jeremiah J. Hogan, M.A., B.LITT (Oxon), on the occasion of the conferring on July 20th, 1954, of the Degree of Doctor of Literature (honoris causa) upon Professor John R.R. Tolkien, M.A.* The National University of Ireland <http://www.nui.ie/college/docs/citations/pre_2002/tolkien_1954.pdf> [accessed 5 January 2023]
- KLASSEN, Peter. 2014. ‘The Lord of the Fonts: a guide to fonts in *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*’, *The One Ring.net* <<https://www.theonering.net/torwp/2014/06/26/90498-the-lord-of-the-fonts-a-guide-to-fonts-in-the-hobbit-and-the-lord-of-the-rings/>> [accessed 8 January 2023]
- MCGUINNE, Dermot. 2010. *Irish Type Design: A History of Printing Types in the Irish Character*, 2nd edn (Dublin: National Print Museum)
- MORAN, James. 1971. *Stanley Morison: His typographic achievement* (Bradford and London: Lund Humphries)
- MORISON, Stanley. 1973. *A Tally of Types*, ed. by Brooke Crutchley (Cambridge: at the University Press)

- PARKES, M.B. 2008. 'Handwriting in English Books', in Nigel Morgan and *Rodney M. Thomson* (eds.). *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain, Vol. II: 1100–1400* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press) pp. 110–35
- RATH, Kyle. 2015. 'The Rhetoric of Type: An exploration of the experiential and iconic nature of letterforms' (master's thesis, University of Pretoria)
- SEDDON, Tony. 2016. *Essential Type: An Illustrated Guide to Understanding and Using Fonts* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press)
- SPIEKERMANN, Erik. 'Foreword', in Coles, Stephen. 2012. *The Anatomy of Type: A Graphic Guide to 100 Typefaces* (New York: Harper Design) p. 6
- STAUNTON, Mathew D. 2005. 'Trojan Horses and Friendly Faces: Irish Gaelic Typography as Propaganda', *Revue Lisa*, 3.1 <<https://doi.org/10.4000/lisa.2546>>
- VICTOR Hammer. [n.d.]. Klingspor Museum <<http://www.klingspor-museum.de/KlingsporKuenstler/Schriftdesigner/Hammer/VHammer.pdf>> [accessed 5 January 2023]
- WAKELIN, Daniel. 2017. 'Paleography', in *The Encyclopedia of Medieval Literature in Britain*, ed. by Siân Echard and Robert Rouse (John Wiley & Sons), <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/9781118396957.wbemlb578>>